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THIRTY-SIXTH ANNUAL COUNCIL MEETING

THE SOCIAL AND POLITICAL IMPLICATIONS OF THE
HOMELANDS EXAMINED

by

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SOUTH AFRICAN INSTITUTE OF RACE RELATIONS (INC)
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We wish to thank the organisers of the thirty-sixth Council of the South African Institute of Race Relations for inviting us to address you this year in Cape Town on the subject of the social and political implications of the homelands. It is with regret that neither of us is able to attend personally, but we have decided to place very briefly before your Council our ideas on the subject, in the hope that they will stimulate a healthy and objective discussion. It is not possible for us, two years after the establishment of one of the Bantustans, to deal with the subject scientifically and to provide the Council with statistical data, simply because in the first place not much has happened in the Transkei for one to be positive in one's deductions at its infant stage, and in the second place, any conclusions based on whatever data is at present available will be speculative. Our observations are, therefore, bound to be tentative and hesitant and will only serve to indicate fears, hopes, and doubts about the homelands concept.

Let us state once and for all that the idea of homelands raises in our minds the unwelcome prospect of the fragmentation of South Africa into independent geographical hideouts for ethnic groups whose isolation and concentration will breed a selfish and exclusive mentality, with one group growing more and more aggressively conscious of other ethnic groups which are inferior to it. This ethnic consciousness is altogether irreconcilable with the growing interdependence of races and nations in the modern world, when scientific developments and modes of transport have made nations in countries which are thousands of miles apart next door neighbours. This tendency of bringing nations, races, tribes or ethnic groups, whatever they are called, closer together is an inevitable consequence of man's conquest of distance, space and time with the result that no country today can claim that its inhabitants are of any one particular race. The homeland concept in South Africa then seeks to unravel and sort out our mixed society despite modern trends to bring the races more and more together in a world of economic interdependence.

To our minds it is impossible for homelands as such to satisfy economically, socially, industrially, educationally and politically those who live in them. Migratory labour makes the homeland citizen spend a major portion of his adult wage-earning lifetime outside the homeland and he cannot therefore be said to live in the homeland. Nor can he be said to draw satisfaction from the homeland in which he resides only for short holiday periods. Is it not correct to observe that the satisfaction of his aspirations is derived from the society in which he leads a greater portion of his working lifetime outside the homelands? No matter what is meant by satisfaction if there is anything that destroys insularity it is efficient means of communication. It is only natural for human beings to long to follow the road beyond the horizon, and no artificial barrier will kill the urge to travel to foreign lands, and even to the border industries. The border industries, intended to entrench the system of migratory labour travelling

over a short distance between home and place of employment ironically undermines the possibility of engendering any satisfaction with the homeland as such in the homeland dweller. Because the worker in the border industries must of necessity live at the place of employment with frequent visits to his home at the weekend or monthend, he spends most of his earnings, not in the homeland to improve its economy, but outside the homeland where he is temporarily resident for longer periods than he is permanently resident in the homeland.

Thus the homeland African grows into the urbanised African who finds social reality in the White areas. He becomes detribalised and nonethnic, fastens on to the social life of the towns where he becomes one with members of other ethnic groups, and has a free and satisfying life in this nonethnic society. There is however the conservative African homeland dweller who has not had contact with society outside the homeland. He will be relatively happy to live in the homeland.

It is impossible to imagine any cultural institution in the homeland being other than western in form. If an institution is cultural, it has to distil the best in society and present it to growing youth in concentrated form. Since homeland society must of necessity change as its members become westernised by travel, by long residence in White areas, and by education, and society's moral code must change through Christianity, indigenous cultural institutions will serve no purpose the best of primitive society has no place in changed society. What is culturally indigenous will become through westernisation the new values and new cultural standards of a changing homeland society. We have mentioned Christianity as an agent that will bring about a change in the cultural standards of homeland society, for its teachings condemn some of the society preserving cultural institutions of indigenous races. Happily the African who will be a homeland citizen was in his primitive society not a worshipper of a visible God but of his invisible ancestors, and the concept of an unseen Christian God is easily grasped and accepted. Christianity, because of the Africans spiritual background of worship of a nonvisible ancestor, introduced no new concept of worship to the African and is therefore a powerful agent in destroying indigenous cultural institutions.

Homeland Governments will satisfy the permanent resident in the homelands only to the extent that they will meet the desire of the African to regulate, control and direct those affairs which relate specifically to the homelands - i.e. the location, the tribe, the district, the region and the whole homeland. But we feel that the permanent resident cannot isolate himself from other homelands and matters, national and international, which affect all persons irrespective of homeland affiliation. He will therefore seek to have a word in the control of these matters. The homeland citizen in White areas cannot be interested in the government of a territory in which he does not live although he is its citizen. His concern will be to control and regulate and to have a say in the government of the territory in which he is permanently resident, i.e. the White area. This is clearly understandable as citizens of one country living in another take very little interest in the government of their country, government by remote control just does not exist.

As we see the future, our hope is that, since homelands have come to stay, they should be regarded as provinces of the Republic and their governments should enjoy no more than provincial status. We also see the homelands as geographical areas where all Republican citizens should enjoy equal citizenship rights.

A peasant population is characteristically conservative and

the homeland peasant population is no exception. We do feel however, that western civilisation has already shaken the peasant population out of its unyielding conservatism and that it is ready to move, however slowly, with the changing times and its rate of social change will depend upon the extent to which it is exposed to agents of change such as religion, education, economic demands, legislation, etc.

The present political involvement of the chiefs and headmen is feared for the perpetuation of the chieftainship. At present the chiefs and headmen are legislators, administrators and judicial officers and this to us is an unhealthy combination. Their political party alignment is bound to set them at loggerheads with those of their subjects who are of a different political persuasion and this is bound to affect the chiefs' administration. In a changing African society the chief cannot hope to exercise the same type of authority formerly enjoyed by him over primitive society. The preservation of the institution of chieftainship will depend upon the willingness of the chief to surrender his prerogatives until he ultimately becomes a figurehead to whom the tribe clings sentimentally as a unifying head. It is only in this way that the institution of chieftainship is likely to remain as the chief surrenders his power to the democratic will of the people so will the institution of chieftainship continue to survive.

It has been a matter of surprise to note that in the Transkei homeland the citizens are growing more and more politically conscious. The general elections held in November, 1963 showed a very much higher percentage of votes cast than expected, and two of the three subsequent bye-elections have indicated a continued and increased desire to exercise the vote. As the people realise that their representatives shape the destiny of the tribe or race, so do they become more concerned with the representative they elect. This has been the case in the Transkei and if the homeland has done nothing else, it has at least taught the citizen of the Transkei the power of the ballot box.

We are of the view that where the citizens of a homeland are of one racial group, the government of that homeland will become more and more nationalistic and authoritarian, there will grow in the homeland citizen a race mentality that will seek to preserve and protect the race as a group, to suppress individual rights and liberties if it is felt that the group will benefit by such suppression. Governments will rule and legislate for the good of the homeland and not for the good of its individual citizens. This leads to authoritarianism. It must be conceded that at present the different racial groups of the homelands are ethnically conscious although not to the same degree as they were say thirty years ago. Education, travel, social contacts are agents which have tended to destroy ethnic consciousness, but may well produce ultimately an African nationalism which is dangerous. Our hope is that such an African nationalism will grow in a liberal atmosphere of tolerance, and respect for other races to the extent that it will be submerged by a loyalty to a country whose inhabitants are of various racial groups bound together by that single loyalty.

The tribal structure is in the process of disintegration. Tribal institutions can no longer cope with the demands of a changing society that is moving away from primitive conservatism as a result of westernisation. Whilst originally the clan to which an African belonged was a matter of great significance, as for

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instance, in a prospective marriage alliance, today this is of secondary importance. Tembus, Pondos, Fingoes and Xhosas live under a Tembu chief, a Pondo chief or a Xhosa chief without uneasiness and do not miss the lack of association with their tribe, and while customs may vary, the law courts apply Tembu custom to a Fingo living in Tembuland. This has a tendency of destroying tribal structure psychologically. It is difficult in these circumstances to see the tribal structure surviving the stresses and strains of the Africans' changing society.

We hope that we have in some measure assisted your study group in tackling this subject and will be happy to learn what its conclusions are.

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